

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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BRIEFING

Monday, May 26, 1969

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MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: Roger Morris *Roger*

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Pius Okigbo (o-KEEG-bo) Biafran
Special Representative -- 4:30 p.m. today

I think you are up to date on the more important military and political developments of the Nigerian war. (A copy of our latest status report to the President is attached; as a history refresher, I have also attached my first memo on Nigeria.)

~~Okigbo is one of Biafra's roving ambassadors sent out to scare up more sympathy and support. Typically, he is urbane, articulate, clever, and persistent. He was Nigeria's Ambassador to the Common Market prior to secession, wrote the definitive book on Africa and the Market, is a first-rate economist who would be a prize for any university here. (Okigbo is being accompanied by Dr. Otue (O-tu-way), the Biafran officed unofficially in New York.~~

~~Okigbo understands clearly that he is doing the talking at this session, while we only listen politely. He will quickly slide over relief -- if he touches it at all -- to the political problem. There is the standard recital of atrocities against the Ibos, bad faith of the Federals, and the unwavering determination of the Biafrans to fight to the death. (There is also a usual warning of rising Soviet influence in Federal Nigeria.) Okigbo's favorite line is that sovereignty is the only authentic guarantee that the Ibos will survive as a people in West Africa.~~

~~Okigbo will probably press home two points.~~

~~-- The Feds can't win militarily. The OAU and their other friends (Britain and Russia) can't -- or won't -- convince Lagos of the folly of continued fighting.~~

~~-- The U.S. is the only third party left with decisive influence. At best, we should try to mediate. At least, we should demonstrably climb off the Federal side and be truly impartial on the issue of secession. (What they want, in effect, is a public statement that we no longer have an interest in "one Nigeria".)~~

It would waste time to challenge Okigbo on his substantive points, though most are open to serious question. ~~We recommend you confine your response to the following.~~

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1. You thought it useful and fair to give the Biafrans a hearing on these issues. We assume their absolute discretion about this meeting.

2. The President has made our position very clear on the civil war. We are concerned to do all we can on relief. That is what Clyde Ferguson is doing and we hope Biafra will cooperate in these efforts.

3. But we don't think it serves anyone's interest for the U. S. to become embroiled in the bitterly disputed political questions in the conflict.

4. We will continue to watch developments in Nigeria and Biafra very closely. The Biafrans should know that there are ample ways to convey their views or information to responsible people in this Government.

5. At this point we simply hope that both sides in the war would resolve to try negotiations. No outsider can force that decision. But Biafra strengthens her case most effectively by being as reasonable and conciliatory as possible in getting talks started.

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